

**MARYLAND GOVERNOR’S COMMISSION ON  
HISPANIC AFFAIRS  
Meeting Minutes**

Date: Wednesday, February 2, 2011

Time: 4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Place: House of Delegates  
6 Bladen Street, Delegation Room #180  
Annapolis, Maryland

Present: Chair Y. Maria Welch, Mariana Cordier, Carmen Ortiz Larsen,  
Elizabeth Ysla Leight, Hector G. Manzano

Absent: Vice Chair Ricardo Martinez, Elizabeth C. Bellavance, Javier G.  
Bustamante, Ricard V. Cook, Lydia Espinosa Crafton, Christina M.  
Diaz-Malone, Ricardo Alberto Flores, Colonel Robert L. Hylton,  
Maria T. Pinto Johnson, Sonia E. Mora, Arelis A. Pérez, Nicolas H.  
Ramos V, Lea Ybarra

Ex-Officio: Jorge Austrich, Genevieve Segura

Staff Present: Jessy Mejia, Agnes M. Smith

**I. Call to Order and Greetings**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Y. Maria Welch who welcomed everyone to the Commission’s Legislative Roundtable 2011. She also thanked the Baltimore Chamber of Commerce and the Montgomery County Hispanic Chamber of Commerce on hosting the legislative event to be held next door. She invited everyone to join them. She again thanked everyone for being there and asked Commissioners to introduce themselves.

Chair Welch noted that this evening the Commission would be having their Legislative Roundtable and this have been done over the past two years which is an opportunity they have for the community and the legislators where we can hear from them and they can hear from us about the issues, bills, dialogue, etc. There are some very hot bills that are extremely important mainly with the Maryland In-State Tuition Bill SB 167 and HB 1236. Chair Welch introduced Mr. Izzy Patoka, Director for Inter Governmental Affairs and Governor’s Office of Community Initiatives which houses the various ethnic commissions.

**II. Legislative Roundtable**

**Governor’s Budget and Legislative Priorities**

**Israel “Izzy” Patoka, Director, Governor’s Intergovernmental Affairs Office**

Mr. Israel “Izzy” Patoka noted that this is the first meeting of 2011 for the Governor’s Commission on Hispanic Affairs. He thanked the Chair and members of the Commission for the outstanding job that they have done in the first term of the O’Malley/Brown Administration which provided a level of confidence for the O’Malley/Brown Administration to receive a second term because of the outstanding work the Commission does. He noted that one of the first orders of business the Governor had to do in this second term was to submit a budget to the General Assembly. He noted he will be providing an overview of the budget the Governor has submitted on January 21, 2011. He will be highlighting the budget which gives a broad overview and perspective on the fiscal challenges we face, how they are being addressed and how we are maintaining the priorities that the O’Malley/Brown Administration has held in the first term and are important in the second term. Mr. Patoka informed the Commission that Maryland remains 1 of only 8 states with a Triple A bond rating. He noted that during the first term of the O’Malley-Brown Administration the State adopted \$5.6 billion in spending reductions and abolished 4,200 positions. He noted with the budget submitted to the General Assembly if they accept this budget that number will raise from \$5.6 billion to \$6.6 billion. This is a billion dollars of cuts submitted. He noted that in submitting the budget Maryland has preserved its Rainy Day Fund and they are trying to be prepared as we move out of the recession. He spoke about 2007 where there was an inherited structural budget deficit that was approximately \$1.7 billion. He noted that during the special session of the General Assembly proposed cuts that would reduce spending by \$550 million in FY 2009 and would increase General Fund revenues by \$800 million. He noted that the approved Video Lottery Terminals (VLT’s) aka slots plan was supposed to have erased the structural deficit by FY 2012 which is the budget being submitted now and actually create a cash surplus of \$290 million. He noted that unfortunately the under performance of the revenue was extreme through the recession and so in FY 2008 they under performed by \$87 million, FY 2009 1.8 billion, FY 2010 3 billion, FY 2011 3.1 billion and FY 2012 3.5 billion. This is going in the wrong direction. To address the revenues under performing the Governor has suggested on many occasions that he will address it through a steady diet of cuts. He noted that another important factor in this budget is that the recovery dollars go away in FY 2012 which makes the budget challenge even greater than it was. Mr. Patoka noted that President Obama assisted this state and many who participated in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funding and for two years there was substantial amount of funding that helped with infrastructure and created jobs in Maryland and many other states. This does not exist in FY 2012. The Governor says he going to balance the budget without any tax increases. This goes back to the steady diet of cuts. He has to close the \$1.4 billion of General Fund shortfall that’s projected for FY 2012. To do that he’s submitted a budget that cuts out \$1 billion. He noted not quite \$1 billion but \$950 million in reductions. This will improve the outlook in FY 2013 by more than \$800 million. In doing so the Governor for the fifth consecutive year went beyond the guidelines of the spending affordability. He noted that this committee’s goal is to have a 33% reduction to the structural deficit to be achieved by cuts. The Governor’s budget exceeds that and he’s going to reduce it by 37% as opposed to the recommended 33% by the Spending Affordability Committee. He noted that 5% will be maintained in the Rainy Day Fund. He gave an overview of the \$950

million in cuts where 50% is reductions in State agencies, \$94 million in education aid but still protecting education priorities, \$132 million health and benefit reforms and \$52 million local aid. He noted that they were hoping to get 1,500 applicants for the Voluntary Separation Program but they received about 1,000 that were approved. He noted that the difficulty with it is you have to abolish the PIN. This left it up to the managers. He noted that in FY 2007 when the O'Malley/Brown Administration came to Annapolis the State had 53,000 positions, today it has 51,000 positions. It has decreased gradually. He noted there are fewer government employees per Maryland resident than since FY 1974. It's pretty much a streamline government. In order to streamline government, the Governor has consolidated print shops, centralized classification units, consolidated some correctional pre-release facilities, downsized some agencies, etc. Mr. Patoka noted that the Governor wants to maintain a record level of funding for K-12 at \$5.7 billion, Invest Maryland to grow the State's knowledge-based industries by stimulating up to \$100 million in venture capital funds, creating thousands of jobs, \$3.1 billion capital budget State construction spending will support nearly 15,000 construction jobs in FY 2012, no furloughs for State employees and a \$750 bonus, Bay restoration, etc. He noted that out of all these cuts the Governor has attempted to meet the educational needs of our children, make college affordable and improve public safety. He noted that Education Weekly Magazine rated Maryland schools number one in the country for three straight years. There has been a steady increase in education funding. He noted there are a variety of other budget decisions and budget priorities that have been protected. Mr. Patoka noted that the Governor made significant modifications to the State pension system. The liability has been reduced significantly. New State employees will be treated differently than current State employees. Current State employees currently pay 5% of salary and then will get a 1.8% multiplier per year when they retire. You can continue to pay 5% of your salary moving forward if the General Assembly chooses to approve this. He noted that the multiplier will be reduced from 1.8% to 1.5%. If you want to keep it at 1.8% then you have to edge up your contribution to 7%. For new employees they will have to pay 7% and receive the 1.5% multiplier. The decision was made not to unfairly impact current employees. He noted there were other changes he will go over if there are any questions related to that.

Commissioner Carmen Larsen asked was there a State investment on the Race to The Top Initiative or was that all federally funded. Mr. Patoka noted that the \$250 million in school construction is not Race to The Top. Race to the Top is approximately \$60 million above and beyond the State's contribution. He noted that a big issue with the counties is that currently the State pays for teacher pensions. It's a rather complex issue because they are really paid by the school boards. The school boards are really optometrist on how they treat their employees. However the State pays the pension of those employees. There has been some discussion of shifting that burden to the counties. The issue is do you shift to the county executive side or to the school board side so they would have to make internal discussions. The Governor's budget keeps the State as the funder for teacher pensions.

Commissioner Larsen noted there was a discussion about investment to community colleges, is that happening. Are there increases in investments or subsidies to community

colleges, reducing the tuition, etc? Mr. Patoka noted that this year the Governor has a \$5 million making college affordable allocation fund for community colleges. This will hold tuition growth at community colleges to no more than 3%. He also noted that community colleges that hold to this have additional safe dollars.

Commissioner Larsen noted that we haven't touched much on health and one of the things that are a concern to the community is health disparities. She was wondering if Mr. Patoka could touch a little bit on what's happening with the State budget in terms of investment in addressing some of the health disparities issues. Mr. Patoka noted that the Governor has always held in high priority our most vulnerable citizens. He has in this budget included health care coverage to 916,000 low income children and adults. This is about 300,000 more than four years ago. The Governor has fifteen strategic goals and one is to eliminate childhood hunger. There have been a number of transition forums related to some of the themes. Mr. Patoka will send Administrator Jessy Mejia the list of the upcoming transition forums to share with Commission.

Commissioner Larsen wanted to make sure the Governor receives her admiration and accommodation to him for having established Small Business Commission at the State level which is a tremendous breakthrough taking into account the largest employer in the State which is the small business community.

Mr. Patoka informed the Commission that tomorrow is the State of the State address at 12:00 noon. He noted it's being televised and we'll hear some of the Governor's ideals, accomplishments made and his mission moving forward.

Chair Welsh thanked Mr. Patoka for all he does and making sure the Commission's voice is heard. She made a statement about the absence of some of the commissioners this evening. She noted that there was a historical resolution that happened at Baltimore City Council where they presented Mary Pat Clarke an instate tuition bill. Tonight happens to be those hearing and this is one of the reasons that some of the Commissions and community leaders are not here. Chair Welch noted that Commissioner Elizabeth Leight will guide the Commission during the Hispanic Legislators' Session Priorities.

Commissioner Elizabeth Leight noted that it's with great pleasure that they have every year an opportunity to listen and hear from the Hispanic legislators. This year is of course especially sweet since we have with us State Senator Victor Ramirez who will be discussing his legislation. She noted we are also anticipating hearing from Delegate Joseline Peña-Melnyk and Delegate Ana Sol Gutierrez. She welcomed all of them to the Commission meeting.

### **Senator Victor R. Ramirez**

Senator Victor R. Ramirez welcomed the Commission to Annapolis. He spoke about the Maryland In-State Tuition Bill which will give the high school graduates with parents that are paying taxes, good grades, playing by the rules the ability to go to an in-state school. To be treated like everyone else. It's a very simple bill with complications. He noted that on the Senate there are eighteen co-sponsors and they need twenty-four to pass

the bill and twenty-nine to stop the filibuster. He noted they are working on those numbers. He noted they have more than eighteen confirmations but they are still two or three shy of the twenty-four. He noted they have been talking to the University of Maryland System and hope to get their support shortly. They have been talking to community colleges to hopefully get their support as well. Senator Ramirez noted they need as many people as they can to say that it's okay to treat all high school graduates the same. People are needed from all across the State. He gave the Commission a few names needing their help: Senator Frosh, Senator Zirkin, Senator Kasemeyer, Senator Astle, Senator Middleton, Senator Young and Senator Mathias. He noted that Senator Mathias and Senator Young might not be able to vote for it but they can vote towards the number twenty-nine to stop the filibuster. He asked the Commission to reach out to local school boards. He noted that the Governor fully supports this, was given the names of the senators they needed help with. The Governor will be pushing for those people to support it. Senator Ramirez noted that they need Senator Middleton, Senator Frosh, Senator Astle and Senator Zirkin to vote for this. Their vote is critical. He noted that Senator Kasemeyer, Senator Mathias and Senator Young if they would vote to stop the filibuster.

Commissioner Leight noted that one of the things they are asking the community for support is that the community-at-large provides public education for these students and there is quite a bit of investment already in their education and to lose all of that and to lose the bright students that we have just as they are graduating from high school would be a shame. She noted this is something that every parent can recognize. Senator Ramirez noted that they are trying to frame it on the sense that this is fair that students are playing by the rules in a situation no means their own fault. They are trying to make sure they are treated like everyone else, any other high school graduate. Trying to make it more of a education than immigration because he believes it is more about education for having the best and most educated population in the United States for three years running. He noted we owe a lot to these students since they contribute to that number one ranking. These are some of our best and brightest and we need to keep them in our state.

Senator Ramirez spoke about MBE trying to strengthen and make it easier for folks to get contracts, certification and to try to do more for themselves. He spoke about a bill that pops up which talks about getting a certain percentage which is more controversial within the minority communities. He noted that's something down the future and something to keep an eye on. He noted especially the Census which will really help and justify some of the need in the numbers.

#### **Delegate Joseline Peña-Melnyk**

Delegate Joseline Peña-Melnyk also spoke on the In-State Tuition bill which is Delegate Hixson's bill who was unable to attend. She noted that in the House they have about 57 or 58 co-sponsors. She noted that people that have not co-sponsored it promised that they would vote for it if it comes up to the floor. She noted that although it's important to have their co-sponsorship is more important to have their vote. She noted that in Montgomery County everyone co-sponsored except for Delegate William Frick and Delegate Luiz Simmons. She noted that Delegate Luiz Simmons said that he would vote

for it on the floor but he had some questions about the wording of the bill. Delegate Peña-Melnyk noted that there is quite a few in Prince George's County that they are working on. As a personal note one of her bills this session is a bill that actually states that you should not discriminate regarding gender identity. If you decide to express yourself other than the sex you were born they shouldn't be discriminated against when they are looking for housing, employment and credit. This is very important especially given the very difficult economic times we are having presently. It basically does not have public accommodations because a lot of the businesses were concerned and it does not apply to the churches. She noted that the groups that would have come and objected to it they tried to work in a compromise. She noted that the Commission would be happy to know that she met with the retailers and they are supporting it. She also met with the Board of Trade and they will not oppose the bill. She noted it's a big bill because there are people that no matter how you feel they are being discriminated against. Discrimination is not right. She also have a bill called Private Right of Action that states presently when you discriminate against race, sexual orientation, religion you can go in front of federal court or you can go to the Human Rights Commission but you can't go to State court. The State Court is much closer than federal court and a lot of people can travel to it depending on where you leave. She spoke about an African American woman at a gas pump and was refused service and spit on. She noted her only recourse was to go to the Human Rights Commission since she couldn't go to federal court. The Human Rights Commission fined the business \$250. Her bill would allow you to go to State Court/Circuit Court. She noted it's being support by the Federation of the Blind who brought the bill forward. Delegate Peña-Melnyk noted that she will try to get more support for it. Delegate Peña-Melnyk spoke about another bill which state that employers should respect and abide by the wage laws in Maryland. She noted that sometimes they force employees to other laws in other states and make them sign their rights away. This bill states they should not sign their rights away. Maryland has our laws here for a reason. She spoke about an MBE bill that she has co-sponsored with Delegate Dan Morhaim which basically is an extension of the MBE bill which is expiring. She noted that it is always a pleasure to be with the Commission and to feel free to contact them. She noted that they are here to serve.

Commissioner Mariana Cordier spoke about Montgomery Bar supporting amending the divorce separation period which reduces the time period from two years to one year if the parties don't agree and six months if they agree. Delegate Peña-Melnyk noted that she thinks the District of Columbia has this. She hasn't seen the bill but would like to know who the lead sponsor is. She noted that this should go in front of the Women's Caucus which has 56 members. This is a bill that they should be supporting. She asked Commissioner Cordier to find the bill number so she can see who the sponsor is and gently and respectfully request that it comes in front of the Women's Caucus for support. She noted that the Women's Caucus and the African American Caucus has legislative committees and they decide what legislation to support which is wonderful because it's all about the numbers. She noted that in the House there are 141 and you need 71 votes. It matters when you belong to different Caucuses about getting support.

**Delegate Ana Sol Gutierrez**

Delegate Ana Sol Gutierrez noted that she want the Commission to feel welcome here in Annapolis and would love for them to come all the time because they really do need the support of the Commission and there is just a lot of ballots that impact the community. She noted that not all of them have the name immigrant or Latino but there are health issues, employment issues, budget issues, etc. She noted that she thinks it is important for the Commission to decide perhaps today that they will be taking a position on especially like the In-State Tuition bill. They need to write up a letter on the Commission's letterhead and began to say now they support it. Don't wait until the hearing. She noted that with the House Bill there are 58 sponsors but there are still some holdouts. She spoke about Delegate Luiz Simmons who works with the Latino community who is a lawyer who makes his living defending Latinos who will not sign up but says he will support it. She noted that there are others that she should be notified by the Commission as an Hispanic Commission looking out for the lives and quality of life for the Hispanic community. She noted that she would let the Commission know who needs to be targeted. She also noted that no Republicans have signed on. Delegate Gutierrez noted that she serves on the Appropriation Committee and the Health and Human Services Committee. The big issue is how do we move forward and ensure that we are providing the services. Her committee looks at Medicare/Medicaid as well as all the human services like TANA, WIC, benefits that serve the poor community. She noted that as the recession has impacted everybody the need has also increased. What they are now seeing is that they simply are having to cut in these very needy populations. Her number one priority on her committee is to make sure that whatever it is that they can do to shift money around since they can't add money. She noted that sometimes there is funding for a program that in her mind is not as urgent as something that is for needy individual. Delegate Gutierrez noted that fortunately the budget process is the least transparent of all the processing. It's not like having a hearing. She noted that she will work with Administrator Mejia and Chair Welch to keep the Commission alert as they are nearing the end. She noted that sometimes a last minute cut really is going to need not letters but e-mails. She noted that very few things come to the Committee as bills but yesterday that had a bill on Requiring Proof of Lawful Presence to receive any benefits. This is Delegate Anthony O'Donnell's bill for the fourth year in a row. She noted that it is still a flawed bill. She noted it's an ALEC bill which is an organization of republicans that they introduce a lot of model legislation which is very conservative. They are the ones that have the Arizona type law. She noted that she received an e-mail from Delegate Patrick McDonough who is going to be dropping the SB 1070 look alike law here which is the Arizona. She noted that yesterday was very interested because they had a broad variety of people against the bill. There was no one who spoke in support of it. She noted that ACLU, Catholic Conferences, Presbyterian, Homeless groups, CASA, etc. She noted she would love to see at least a letter from the Commission on these bills. Delegate Gutierrez noted that she is actively working under the New Americans Caucus. They have been meeting weekly where she and Delegate Ramirez are the co-chairs. They are working around his bill of the in-state tuition. What she has proposed and hopefully will be able to use this particularly with the media is that they have a theme that says "Maryland is not Arizona". She noted to that effect there are several bills, some she's prepared and others have done also. She has one against that prohibits racial profiling by law enforcement. This is a bill that was introduced in early 2000/2001 by

then Delegate David Valderamma who was the father of current Delegate Christine Valderamma. She decided to use his bill because it has that history that for a long time they have been trying to limit law enforcements ability to discriminate against immigrants. Another one she has is a simple one; it is to take the capacity of a gun. She noted that right now Maryland law says you can have twenty bullets in the magazine; she has reduced it to ten because the assault weapons ban says anything eleven or more is an assault weapon. She noted that Maryland will join those states that have the minimum capacity and there is research that shows the less ammunition a gun has the less possibility of violence for the guns. She noted that she has already begun to get e-mails against it. There are lots of people that want to have their guns. She noted that she is not taking away the gun but just reducing the number of bullets. Delegate Gutierrez noted that her love is education and she is has two education related bills. One creates a drop out task force so that we can finally be able to bring in all the resources around a dropout task force. She noted that she has been serving at the national level with the National Conference of State Legislators on a dropout prevention task force. She noted that one of their recommendations is to create a high level commission or task force that will bring a lot of attention to it. She noted that they have the State Department of Education which does not have any group or high level person focusing on what are the best practices to prevent dropout. Another bill that she is introducing again that resulted from her work on this task force is looking at absenteeism in kindergarten and first grade. What they have been able to find out is that if you can address children that are missing 10% of the year which are very few days, they are falling behind. They have seen that it is a predictor to eventual dropouts. It is an easy thing to measure since we already collect attendance data but we are not doing anything with it. She noted her bill says you need to look at the data and you need to have a plan that rewards good attendance, that celebrates it and if necessary meet with parents or have parent conferences. Delegate Gutierrez noted that she is mentioning this particularly because we know that a lot of Latino families if the child is a little bit sick ..... She noted that we also know for young women especially when getting their cycle they say they are sick so you can stay home. She noted this kind of missing school if you add it up can have a large impact on staying on level for continuing education. She noted that basically these are the two big areas that she focused on this year. She noted that she is being very active with all the issues around women. She noted she is delighted to be here with the Commission and is happy that they are here and active.

### **Delegate Aisha Braveboy**

Delegate Aisha Braveboy thanked the Commission for allowing her to speak. She informed the Commission on behalf of the Legislative Black Caucus on which she serve as the first vice chair she welcomed the Commission to the State of Maryland Lowe House Office Building where they believe the work is done. She noted that the Black Caucus looks forward to working with the Hispanic members here in Annapolis as well as around the State as we look at issues around Minority Business Enterprise. She noted that she worked extensively with Hispanic Chamber last year around issues at WSSC. Delegate Braveboy noted that she is pleased that there is a new disparities study which will call for not only minority business inclusion in the area of construction contracts but also goods and services which the prior study suggested that good and services was not



an area where there was disparities and therefore WSSC planned about four/five years ago to eliminate the MBE program with respects to goods and services. She noted that the new study should be released this week that will show there is a disparity and there is continued need to have a program in that area. She noted that as the Black Caucus, Hispanic Caucus and the members here needs to stay vigilant and to make sure that whatever program is ultimately designed for WSSC aggressively addresses that issue. She noted that as her colleague Delegate Peña-Melnyk mentioned the State also went through the process of doing a disparities study. She noted that there is a bill and once the bill is passed there will be implementation to process. She noted that they need to stay involved in the rule making and the process that's developed to include minorities in the contracting process for the State of Maryland. She noted that she looks forward to working with the Commission collaboratively as they address that issue. Delegate Braveboy mentioned a couple of bills to the Commission in which one bill deals with a task force to study the incarceration numbers for individuals who identify themselves as high school dropouts. She noted they want to know how many of those individuals that are in the jails and prisons as well as those who are being prosecuted through the criminal justice system currently. She noted they believe there is a connection between individuals that drop out of high school and those that end up in the prison population. She noted that every year she and Senator Catherine Pugh would put in a bill to raise the minimum age for student attendance from sixteen to eighteen. However the State will come back with a huge fiscal note of \$40,000,000 that it would cost and they don't have the money. She noted that there is a lot of discussion around that and ultimately the bill fails because of the fiscal note. She noted that it cost \$13,000 a year to educate a child and \$36,000 to incarcerate that same individual. She noted we want to invest the money in the front end and not the back end. She noted to show there is any cause or connection in relationship between individuals who dropout and those that end up in the prison population they want to conduct a study as a first step. She noted in the mean time on a local level Senator Pugh from Baltimore City and herself from Prince George's County are putting in bills that will require parental consent for a child who has reached the age of sixteen to drop out of school. She noted they are not saying they can't leave but the parent needs to be informed and has to consent to it. She noted the interesting thing about the parental consent that just makes sense because a parent is responsible for a child until they are eighteen. If the children are out there and creating havoc on a community a parent can be charged with negligent supervision of their child but they cannot force their child to go back to school by law once they turn sixteen.

Commissioner Cordier asked if the State considered the expense of the GED program. She noted that most of her clients are incarcerated and are doing the GED program in prison. She noted that in her mind they are spending \$40,000,000 anyway doing the GED program in the jails. Delegate Braveboy noted that's a good point and they'll include that the cost for not only housing the jail but also getting an education including going through the GED program in the jail. She noted that these are the two bills she wanted to bring to the Commission's attention and she looks forward to working with the Commission. She noted that whatever the Black Caucus can do to assist the Commission they would be happy to.

Commissioner Carmen Larsen thanked Delegate Braveboy for all her support for the WSSC program which they have worked on for many years to make sure that it continues. She expressed her thanks as a Commissioner and a small business community member the hopes that she will continue to talk about it and support it as they go forward. Delegate Braveboy noted that Delegate Peña-Melnyk is now chairing WSSC and she is chairing the Department of Planning this year and Delegate Peña-Melnyk will be on it.

Chair Welch thanked everyone for the presentations and their continued commitment and passion to the Hispanic community and the community in Maryland. She thanked them for being our champions and the Commission is there to support them and to be their eyes and ears and give any assistance they can.

The Commission was asked to send a letter to Delegate Sheila Hixson on letterhead for introducing the In-State Tuition bill to the House.

Chair Welch asked Mr. Wendell Sutton, Governor's Office of Minority Affairs to say a few words since he has been so kind to provide the Commission with doing business with the State of Maryland, the MBE and the SBR. She noted that throughout the year he has been invaluable to this Commission and is another one of our champions. She noted that he has tried very hard to navigate this at times challenging avenue for small business.

Mr. Wendell Sutton noted that he found it to very interesting the types of things the Commission is involved in. The number of things we can do. He noted that it's apparent that people really take it as a duty and responsibility which is why he is here often. He wants the Commission to know that whatever they need to do or find to do that they have someone here to help from the Governor's office that can do that. He noted that the people on the Commission and those whom they work for shows that they are indeed very much in touch with what's going on not only in the community but the effect of the community-at-large. He noted that he will try to provide the Commission with whatever information they need because that is part of what helps them get better information. He is very pleased and thanked the Commission for the accolade and it's great to be here to help.

Chair Welch noted that the Commission also appreciates the support of Secretary Wanda Jenkins.

### **III. Announcements**

Ex-Officio Jorge Austrich spoke about the Small Business Commission that the Governor has just formed. He noted that out of the seventeen members appointed by the Governor two are Latino. He noted that they will be based at DBED and meetings will begin in February. He noted that the first couple of meetings will be organizational and after they will be holding meetings throughout the State. He noted that they will coordinate meetings in the regions of the State where Latinos dominate.

February 16, 2011 the Maryland Department of Economic Development will be having Invest Maryland which is free of charge. [www.choosemaryland.org](http://www.choosemaryland.org) (Invest Maryland)

Mr. Veronica Cool spoke about the Big Brothers/Big Sisters which is a national organization with local chapters in which their major mission is to ensure that the youth of the metropolitan areas have a positive role model to ensure their graduation rates, increase the opportunity for the student to see some positive behavior that's often times not shown at home. She noted that most of the children are children of incarcerated parents, drug addicted parents, missing parents, living with aunts, uncles and grandparents, etc. She noted that right now in Baltimore and the surround counties the board she belongs to covers Southern Maryland through greater Maryland. She noted that there is a 800 waiting list of primary African Americans and Latino boys because there is not enough mentors available. Ms. Cool noted that the program they have with Wachovia Bank is with high school students that they commit to four years. They come as freshman once a month, they hang out for the day and they also do personal things on the weekends. She noted that January was National Mentoring Month and the President Obama administration brought together mentoring organizations from across the country to address the staggering dropout rates and the increasing criminal activity because these children are coming out of school and having a field day. She noted that unfortunately this is impacting negatively a lot of the different areas. They were selected out of a lottery of about 500. She noted that three of the pairs were selected and at the last minute the First Lady invited her and her little sister on stage and shared their story. She informed the Commission that this can be found on You Tube. She was amazed that the First Lady shared their story of this 16 year old with no hope in her life. She noted that her dad was in jail and her brother was in jail. Ms. Cool noted that the First Lady looked her straight in the eyes and said "You want to be a pediatrician, how are your grades?" "I expect a lot from you". She noted that this was an unbelievable experience and she was glad to be a part of it. She noted if more information is needed to let her know.

Commissioner Leight announced that for the first time ever Anne Arundel County PTA is going to have Annapolis Night on February 15, 2011 from 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. She noted everyone is invited especially PTA members. Also bring your delegates since there are a lot of education bills that they are following and talking to them about.

Chair Welch noted that the Commission is a resource for everyone and to feel free to contact them.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:50 p.m.